

and obviously, it would be a good idea to have someone to go to to provide that kind of assistance.

Then we have health plans demonstrate that they have inadequate number mix and distribution of health care providers to meet consumer needs. Consumers get information on plans including how many people drop out of the program each year, amounts of premium dollars spent on medical care and how providers are paid, just basic disclosure. People should know what they are getting into.

Finally, this is just of course the most important aspects, is that doctors, nurses and other health care workers can speak freely to their patients about treatment options and quality problems without retaliation from HMOs, insurance companies, hospitals, and others. I think the gentleman mentioned before about the gag rule and how we have to eliminate that as well.

This is what we are talking about. This is not any abstract science here. It is just simple things that I think most people probably think that they are getting until they actually find out that the HMO or the managed care plan does not provide it and has these limitations. We get this out to the American public, people understand this. That is why better than 80 percent of the people support these kinds of managed care reforms.

□ 2030

Ms. JACKSON-LEE. Mr. Speaker, I keep raising the 88 percent, because the gentleman is right. If we get the message out as to the Patient Bill of Rights, it is not even out the way it should be, because, as the gentleman has said, the Republican leadership has not yet seen the wisdom of getting it on the floor of the House.

Can my colleague imagine if the American public saw the value of what we were offering and realized in many instances that they did not have those privileges if they had a crisis or real health need? The good thing about what happens in this country is that as many sick people as we have, we have a lot of well people who pay for health insurance and never have the real opportunity, which is very fortunate, to maybe have a serious illness.

Of course, as we age, there are times when we do have, through age, serious illnesses. But, in fact, these persons who are in their prime of working do not have major illnesses and, therefore, are not even aware that there are limits on the kind of treatment that they might be able to get that maybe someone who has children who are all 10 and 12 did not come through the time when in 24 hours you had to be out.

Just think as we educated individuals how they would want the numbers or the numbers would show 100 percent supporting this. If we emphasized the drama of what occurred today. Leader GEPHARDT indicated a "fly-in" of the friends of our colleagues to swat down

any kind of interest in the Patient Bill of Rights. If we could just have the American public see a swarm of bees swarming in to just stop it in its tracks, I would say we would have 120 percent because health is such a sacred part of the quality of life and what we have come to expect in this country.

I cannot imagine why this would not be a bipartisan effort to really run to support the Patient Bill of Rights, because, in doing so, we would be responding to what all of America would want, irrespective of whether or not they are Democrat, Republican, Independent. They clearly want to be able to count on their health plan.

So the gentleman has highlighted several of the major points. I had the opportunity to emphasize some of the other aspects. And it is quite extensive, but it is not redundant, it is not costly, it is certainly recognizing that what we have is a broken system.

We started out with it. It was new. We organized it in a manner that had more of a dominance of the insurance companies as opposed to the health care providers. We see that is wrong; and so we are now going back to fixing, which is a good concept. But the wrong direction. The head is not leading. The tail is leading. I think we need to get it in order so that the health care of this country can be what we would like it to be.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, and I know we only have a couple of minutes left, and I just wanted to say that I know what some of the arguments are that are coming from the opponents. They are saying that it will cost too much. Well, most of these things do not cost anything; and if there is a slight cost from some of them, it is so slight in terms of the benefits that a person is receiving that I think overwhelmingly people would support these patient protections.

The other thing, of course, we hear is that the Democrats, they are trying to move towards national health insurance or socialism. The reason HMOs have become so predominant in the insurance market is basically through the capitalist system. This is not the government. They have actually worked and they have competed and a lot of people have joined them, a majority of people have joined them, but we know that there are times when the system gets out of hand and the government has to step in with some modest restrictions.

These are modest restrictions. That is all we are talking about. This is not major tinkering with the system. HMOs will still be out there, and managed care will still be out there. They can still compete, but we are saying that these basic provisions have to be met to provide some semblance of quality health care.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back to the gentleman, because she, in fact, organized this special order this evening. But I thank the gentleman for having me participate in it.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, it was certainly my pleasure. And, as we close, I certainly want to thank the Speaker for this time. I think this was an important discussion on the floor of the House, and I am delighted to have the gentleman from New Jersey join on the kinds of issues that we will be facing. We have a plan. Our task force has a plan. It is certainly appropriate for the leadership to move forward on this issue of good health care.

THE AMERICAN WORKER AT A CROSSROADS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the Majority Leader.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CONGREGATION OF GRAAFSCHAP CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH ON THEIR 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, to begin with tonight, I rise today to recognize the congregation of the Graafschap Christian Reformed Church of Graafschap, Michigan, as they celebrate 150 years of service to God, family, and their community.

On April 4, 1847, 14 pioneers left Rotterdam, the Netherlands, with the hope of finding religious freedom and economic opportunity in America. They arrived in New York harbor on May 23 and settled on the south shore of Macatawa beach in Holland, Michigan, on June 20.

The settlers soon founded the Graafschap Christian Reformed Church, dedicating their first log church in 1848. As Graafschap Christian Reformed Church grew in numbers and strengthened her spiritual roots, its vision expanded beyond its own congregation and extended into its community. In the past 150 years, the church has been a strong supporter of Christian education. As a leader in community ministry, the congregation has supported and participated in mission projects around the world.

The past and present members of the Graafschap Christian Reformed Church have had a profound impact on the Holland, Michigan, area. Now with more than 500 members, the church is dedicated to continuing its spiritual mission far into the future.

I would like to extend my thanks to Graafschap Christian Reformed Church for 150 years of service and commitment to God and the community, and offer my congratulations on the celebration of their anniversary. May God continue to bless the congregation and their work in the years to come.

THE AMERICAN WORKER AT A CROSSROADS

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to move on to another topic, a topic that I feel very strongly about and that I have a high degree of interest in. The project is called the American Worker at a Crossroads, because I think we recognize that the American worker is at the heart of our economy. It is not

what Congress does, it is not what the President does, it is not what the Federal Reserve does, it is the American worker that is at the heart of our economy and determines whether we will have a thriving economy and whether we will move forward or whether we will move backward.

What is the purpose of the American Worker at a Crossroads project? Very simply, we want to promote the most effective workplace on the planet. We want to develop a system of laws and rules and regulations, an environment where the American worker has the opportunity to thrive and to be successful and to truly develop and contribute with all of their skills.

We want a workplace and a workforce and an economy that provides for the American worker when they assume their responsibilities, that when they step forward and assume their responsibilities that they will have security, that they will have flexibility, and because of the opportunity that is provided and because of their taking advantage or their taking responsibility for their future, they can have prosperity well into the 21st Century.

The process that we are going through as we take a look at developing a strategy is we are stepping back and we are taking a look at where the economy was in 1938, the 40s and 50s, but we have picked 1938 as a classic year because this is when many of the labor laws were originally developed. And we are saying, what was 1938 like and what was the environment and what was the economy like in 1938 and how does that compare to where we were in 1988 and where we are in 1998 and where we expect to be after the year 2000? And as the set of laws and rules and regulations that developed out of the 30s and 40s is that the kind of framework that is going to allow the American worker to be successful in the future?

We are also taking a look at whether the programs and the activities that are currently taking place in the Department of Labor, an agency that has a budget of somewhere in the neighborhood of \$35 billion per year, which makes the Department of Labor bigger than all of the expenditures in the State of Michigan, are the expenditures in the Department of Labor helping the American worker to achieve their dream and their vision, or is it a barrier to the American worker to compete in this new environment?

So, under the Results Act, which says we are going to every agency in government, and I have oversight specifically for the Department of Labor, we are asking them to meet the Results Act. Where are they going? How are they going to get there? And how will the Department know whether they got there or not?

Those are some very basic questions that we should be asking of any agency that gets over \$30 billion per year.

Also, as we take a look at the future of the American worker, we are going

out into America and we are taking a look at the American workplace. In the last 2 months we have had 22 roundtables in five different cities where management and where workers, where academics, where public policy experts, business owners, managers, workers, union members, nonunion members, locally elected officials, have all told us about what is working and what is not working in the private sector, what is working in regards to American labor law and what is not working, where we are facilitating and where we are a barrier.

We have had a great response. We have learned a lot, and I will share a little bit of that with you as we go through the special order tonight, but it has been fascinating. American workers are being successful. They are competing on an international basis; and many of them are doing it very, very successfully.

That is what this project is about. It is about each and every American worker. It is about each and every American who wants to work and to contribute to this country.

It is about the single mom. It is about the young father. It is about the young couple who are saving for their first house or for the middle-aged couple that is facing the task of helping their children go through college. It is about the kids who are in college, the skills that they are going to need to make sure that they can become successful. It is about the young people that are out there that are making the decision as to whether they are going to go to college or whether they are going to go into a trade or technical school, because we need a balance of those occupations filled in this country if we are going to be successful.

This is about the real world. This is not about sitting in Washington and reading documents. This is about going to the actual workplaces, going to the American worker and going to the different communities around this country to find out what is working. This is about trying to connect what Washington is doing to what is going on at the grassroots level.

□ 2045

It is about trying to see whether there is a connect or whether there is a disconnect between Federal labor policy, Federal labor law and what we really need to do to be successful. As we go through this process, I think it will lead to a dialogue about change, about how do we create a more favorable environment for the American worker that recognizes perhaps that the economy of 1998, but more importantly the economy of the year 2000 and beyond, is very, very different than the economy and the society that we had in 1938 and 1948 when many of these laws were first created.

Let us take a look at 1938. What was 1938 like? Remember, this is the era when the Federal Government started to exert a more powerful role in to the

relationships between employer and employee. You really cannot judge whether that was good or bad. That was 60 years ago. But let us take a look at 1938 and recognize that many of these laws are still on the books and take a look at 1938, take a look at 1998 and say, would you, is there still a match or have we changed?

In 1938, 20 percent, 20 percent of all American workers were unemployed. Today the national unemployment rate is in the neighborhood of 4 to 5 percent. What kind of workers did we have in 1938? What were the American people doing? The employment picture for America in 1938 reflected that one out of every five, 22 percent of the American workers, were agrarian, worked in agriculture, 78 percent were nonagrarian.

Where are we in 1998? Today we have 2.5 percent of the American work force involved in agriculture, and 97.5 percent of us work in something other than agriculture. What about in manufacturing? Well, man if we lost all these jobs in agriculture, they must have moved into manufacturing. No. In 1938, 33 percent of the nonagrarian population, the nonagrarian work force, 33 percent worked in manufacturing. What is it in 1998? It is 15.4 percent. We went from 33 percent of our work force in 1938 working in manufacturing to today where it is 15.4 percent. Where did they go? Retail is up from 15 percent to 18.1 percent. Services is up from 11.4 percent to 28.8 percent. So we have seen a dramatic increase in services.

Another fast-growing compared to manufacturing or agrarian which went down in employees is the size of government. In 1938, 13.1 percent of all American workers worked in some level of government. In 1998, it is 16.3 percent.

What else is different about 1938 versus 1998? In 1938, the average life expectancy for Americans was 59.7 years. Today it is 75.8 years. Interestingly enough, 70 percent of the Members of the United States Congress were born after 1938. Most of the Members or a good number of the Members in this chamber were born after some of the most significant labor laws were developed in this country. Those laws are still in effect today. In 1938 is when the Fair Labor Standards Act was signed.

Also if you take a look at 1938, there was no television, no computer chip, no personal computer, no e-mail, no nylon, no compact disk, no Home Depot, no Intel, no Wal-Mart, no Microsoft. For some there was also no Bill Gates. Probably also no telemarketing, which probably would have been a blessing for all of us.

The question now becomes do those changes encourage us to take a look at labor law and say, does it fit or does it need to change? Since American workers are doing different things in different types of occupations, do we really need to take a look at whether the labor laws that were put in place still match these new industries?

What is one of the fastest growing sectors in our economy today? It is the high tech industry. It is about \$866 billion per year. It is 50 percent higher than the construction sales. How big is it? It is bigger than the sale of all food products. It is bigger than the automotive industry. The high tech industry is 866 billion; the automotive industry is about 433 billion.

What we need to do, this is what the American worker project is about, is we are stepping back, we are taking a look at American labor law. We are taking a look at the agencies that have oversight over our workers and over the workplace. What we are intending to do as we step back and analyze what we have, where we want to go, we are deciding that we are going to develop a plan and a strategy to create a playing field that is clearly proworker, taking into account what do we need to do to provide security and flexibility, recognizing that workers first have to step up and assume some responsibility themselves, but provide security and flexibility also in a rapidly changing world. How do we make sure that employees today, where rather than the expectation being you are going to be in one job and you are going to be there for 30 years and retire from that firm, you may go through four career changes in your lifetime, in your professional career?

It means that we really need to take a look back and say, how do we prepare or how do we provide and encourage or create a greater opportunity for workers to participate in training, for education to make sure their benefits move with them from one job to the next? How do we allow them to prepare for anticipated technological changes? How do we provide an environment where the American worker can prepare himself or herself to compete in a global economy?

We need to create a proworker agenda because it is the American worker that is the driving force in our economy. We have to create an environment where the American worker has the opportunity to be successful so that as companies choose where they are going to locate their plant, whether they are going to locate it in Michigan or whether they are going to locate it in California, which is the decisions that many times are being made today, but we also know that in a global economy, companies are going to be making the decision as to whether they locate in Michigan or whether they are going to locate in England or whether they are going to locate in China.

We need to make sure that as organizations go through the process of making those decisions that it becomes very difficult for them to come anywhere, to go anywhere else but the USA because we will have the best-skilled workers. We will have the best infrastructure in place. We will have the best learning environment. It is where people will want to work. It is where organizations will want their

products and services produced because we will have the most talented work force. We will have labor law in place which allows those workers to be the most productive workers on the planet.

That is what a proworker agenda is about. It is not an agenda that is supporting business. It is not an agenda about supporting unions or bashing businesses or bashing unions. The focus needs to be on the American worker because it is the American worker that each and every day gets up and goes to work and works under the rules and regulations that we have put in place. And we need to make sure that those rules and regulations enable that worker to be the best-trained and the most productive worker in the world.

Let us take a look at some of the other trends that are going on, that have implications for the American worker. What kinds of trends do we see going on? We know that by the year 2000, the American, the population will reach about 270 million people. But we also recognize that the annual growth rate of our population continues to decrease. Back in the early 1900s, we were growing at roughly 1½ percent per year. By the year 2020, 2030, we will be growing at about 6/10 of a percent per year. What this means is that if we want to continue to grow and to expand economic opportunity, we are going to have to work to make sure that our workers can increase their productivity.

A second trend that will have implications for the American work force is that in 1995, we have about 4, 4.1 workers for every person who is over 65. So that means for the people who are between the ages of 25 and 64, we have about 4.1 for every person who is over 65. In 35 years, that ratio will switch. That ratio will move from 4.1 to about 2.3, meaning that there will roughly be 2.3 workers for every person who is over 65.

Obviously as the number of people in the work force versus the number of people who are over 65 creates a number of different challenges. There is an inevitable explosion in the cost of entitlements such as Social Security. The need for greater participation rate of people over 65 in the work force, that is a possibility. Do they want to work after they are 65? Does American labor, does American tax law encourage participation of people over 65 in the work force? Do we provide a neutral situation where there is really no tax advantage or disadvantage to participating in the work force or not participating in the work force? This tells us that perhaps by 2030, we ought to provide tax incentives to encourage seniors to participate in the work force.

Today the situation is much different. I do not know what the answer is, but I believe it is a dialogue that we ought to be having in 1998 rather than in 2025, because the sooner we start discussing this issue, the sooner we can start reaching a consensus on how we want to evolve tax law and American

labor law in a way that will enable us to be productive in this country.

What is another trend that we are aware of? I think this is a positive trend. There is going to be a greater diversity in the American population. There will be a decrease in the number of white non-Hispanics from 76 percent of the population to 68 percent. There will be an increase in Orientals from 4 percent to 6 percent of our population. The Hispanic population is projected to grow from 9 percent to 14 percent. This can be a challenge, or it can be an opportunity. But I believe a growing diversity of the Nation's population in the work force is likely to create some very interesting opportunities. We will bring a greater diversity of skills and backgrounds into this country for us to learn and grow from.

What is another trend that we see? A change in the traditional family structure. In 1940, 67 percent of families consisted of a husband who worked and a wife who did not. Only 9 percent of families had two working spouses. By 1995, the man was the sole earner of only 17 percent. So from 1940 to 1995, we went from 67 percent to 17 percent. Two parents working in the family now is the reality for 43 percent of our families.

□ 2100

In 1970, 11 percent of our families with children under 18 were headed by a single parent. By 1996 that number had risen to 27 percent. By the year 2005, women are expected to represent 48 percent of the work force. More than 70 percent of mothers today are in the work force.

It is not a value judgment about whether those statements are right or wrong, good or bad. It is kind of like this is the reality that we have in America in 1998 and we need to take a look at what used to be nontraditional families or work styles or work patterns in the family and does American labor law recognize that kind of reality? Or was it set up to support and reflect the reality that most of the time there was a parent at home. That is not the case today.

Do we provide the flexibility, the opportunity for adults to have flexibility in their job schedules so that they have a greater degree of latitude in making sure that a parent is home with a child, if that is what they choose to do, so that parents can adjust their work schedules perhaps to a greater degree of flexibility in relationship to when their children are at school, when their children are on vacation or perhaps when their children have a day off of school? Do parents have the kind of flexibility to match their work schedules to their children's schedules? Those are some questions that we ought to ask. How do we support a family to make different kinds of choices about how they will support their family?

There is a couple of other interesting trends. This relates to how we work. I

mean technology is going gang busters. It is unbelievable what technology is doing in the workplace. I have been out of the private sector for a little over 5 years, and going back and touring different plants and going through different facilities it is amazing that even in 5 short years how much technology has changed work environments and really enhancing the skills and the capabilities of American workers.

What has happened to the cost of telecommunications? They have decreased significantly. What used to cost \$9 in 1950, this is a charge for a 3-minute call from New York to the United Kingdom, in 1950 that 3-minute call cost \$9. By 1996 we were down in the neighborhood of \$3.

But I think even more interesting than the reduction in the cost of telecommunications is the change in processing capability. How many transistors can be packed onto a single microchip? It doubles every 16 or every 18 months. It is expected to reach 125 million by the turn of the century. What that means is the number of transistors packed onto a single Intel microprocessor. In 1971, a little over, roughly 2,000. By 1978, model number 2, we moved up in the area of perhaps 50,000. By 1997, we are approaching 10 million. And they are expecting by the end of the century to reach 125 million. And that has a very huge impact on the workplace. And the amazing thing is they keep packing this stuff onto a transistor while lowering costs.

We would all like to own a Rolls Royce, perhaps. Coming from Michigan, I would prefer to own a car built in Detroit. But if Rolls Royce or anybody who makes a hundred thousand dollar car had applied the same increases in productivity to producing a car that Intel and other chip manufacturers have put into their processing, a hundred thousand dollar car in 1975 today would cost \$4.50. The cost of technology is going down, which is enabling us to increase the productivity, the effectiveness of the American workplace and will have a significant impact on the workplace of the future.

Let us talk about some of the places that we have visited. We have gone to a number of high-tech areas. We have been in Seattle, we have been in Silicon Valley, we have been in Dallas and Houston and Atlanta. Twenty-two roundtables. I think we have talked to 187 different people, most of the time in the area where they work, if not specifically in the facility that they work.

One message keeps coming back. We need skilled workers. We need a system that allows our workers to receive training, training, training, training, because the very nature of their jobs continues to evolve. We need an environment where we have skilled people entering into the work force and when they are in the work force they keep enhancing their skills.

Now, some workers may think that that's threatening, but in the workers we talk to it is exhilarating. The abil-

ity to take a job and grow it and grow it and grow it rapidly is exciting, because each time they learn and expand their job it is an opportunity to more fully utilize their God given skills.

What numbers do we see? Occupations requiring a Bachelor's Degree or above will average a 25 percent growth, or double the projected growth rate for occupations requiring less education and training. We need more skilled workers: Systems analysts, computer engineers. These are the third and fourth fastest growing occupations from 1994 to 2005. We need systems analysts; we need computer engineers. This is a fast growing industry. There are great opportunities.

This is also a kind of an interesting thing. When we are talking about software and we talk about the nature of competition, if you are a software engineer, we need you. And if we do not provide skills and opportunity for individuals to get those skills, what happens? We will have software engineers in other parts of the world, because when you are writing software, you are not limited by time or distance. If you write a program in Indonesia, if you write it in China, if you write it in India, you can probably get your product to the office next door faster than I could if I was in the office next door and just kind of walked over. You can get it over.

Remember the cost we talked about in telecommunications? Right now 11 semiconductor companies they had open requisitions for 17,000 employees. Nearly 40 percent of surveyed manufacturers said skill deficiencies prevented them from introducing new technology or enhancing their productivity. Manufacturers are saying we can increase productivity, lower the cost of our products, increase the value of the American worker but we need workers with more skills. Twenty percent of surveyed manufacturers said that they are potentially stopping business expansion because they do not have enough workers with the skills that they need. Eighty-eight percent of surveyed manufacturers reported a shortage of qualified workers in at least one job category.

What have we found in our site visits? We have gone there, we have invited people on the other side of the aisle to participate with us. The Department of Labor has been at all of our events. Remember the opportunity and what we are trying to do is obtain input from individual Americans on how they view their jobs, their companies and their workplace to better understand what is working and what is wasted. All of this with the intent of getting more money back into the pockets of the American worker and developing an American worker agenda; to encourage candid discussions; to make sure that America is globally competitive in the 21st century; to pinpoint and identify innovative practices; to identify emerging trends; to make sure that we can measure those

trends versus the restrictions that may be placed on them in labor law; and to obtain an overview of the future.

We have had some wonderful success stories. One of the places we visited, we met with a group of management and union employees dealing with the maritime industry, an industry that has seen its work force decline from 30,000 to 3,000. They are going to come back to us with a proposal and say, you know, some of the labor law and some of the Federal restrictions, some of the problems were self-inflicted but some of it was the result of American labor law. We are going to come back to you with a recommendation from labor and from management on how we might modify that labor law because we would like to get those jobs back in America.

We have gone to a job training site and we have heard success stories about people who have gone through this. A welfare mom, for 13 years, tried to get into an apprenticeship program, constantly excluded. Finally got into another job apprenticeship program. She is 33. She is off of welfare. She has bought her own home, has her child enrolled in a private school. She is now living the American dream. She got the skills that were required, moved into a job, bought a home and is helping her child now get an education.

Here is an example one of the corporations we visited and one of the colleges that we visited. There is a lot of good stuff going on in America's community colleges. But this community college said before we do anything to give them, our students, advanced skills or college level skills, 60 percent of our students who are coming in are not ready for college level work. Think about this. How can we be globally competitive if 60 percent of our students who are entering community college do not have the basic skills to do college work?

The constant theme we get is the shortage of workers. Another success story. A small waste management, wastewater management plant, an excellent story of union and management coming together creating an innovative work environment, a team environment. We hear about participation, teaming, blurring the lines between management and employees to focus on the success of the corporation. Employee involvement. The result? The gain sharing plan. Because of this team effort between union personnel and management, \$2,000 in the pocket of each worker in 1996.

Another thing people are talking about, different work styles. Telecommuting. People working from their home because of the change in technology. The need for flatter, more flexible work environments. The nature of work in many industries is changing and management and workers are recognizing that they need to work together to be successful in a global economy.

Another community college that we visited talks about in their program

they formed a partnership. Key word: Partnership, teams. Whether it is between business and college, whether it is between management and workers, whether it is between unions and management, the marriage of labor and education is their theme, recognizing that the skills that they teach within their community colleges have to be directly translated and transferable into a job.

□ 2115

Talk about rapid change. We visited with a company, a high-tech company. Their planning year, they talk about a web year. I did not know what a web year was. They told me, "Well, our planning horizon is about 90 days." I said, "That is kind of short-sighted. Why do you not plan longer?"

In their industry they have as much change going on in 90 days as perhaps other people have going on in a year. As a matter of fact, this company, this high-tech company, 80 percent of their product volume in 1998 will come from products that were introduced in the last 3 months of 1997.

Talk about a rate of change. Think about this: 80 percent of your product volume comes from products that were introduced in the last 3 months of 1997.

And you say, it must be a small start-up company. Wrong. They have 15,000 employees, 15,000 employees, who now recognize that they have to compete in four areas. They have to be the most advanced and most skilled in technology. They have to be very good at marketing. They have got to keep their costs down. And they have got to develop an organizational capability. Because not only do they have to get it right, but they have to do it over and over and over again because of the shortness of the life cycles in the products that they are dealing with.

Does American labor law recognize this kind of environment when we go back to 1938 and it took, like, five and a half days to build a car? Today, General Motors can build a car in 26 hours; and a company like this recognizes that they have to produce new products because, next year, 80 percent of that volume will come from the products that they just introduced and they have the future of 15,000 employees in their hands.

Another corporation talked to us about areas of low unemployment. They have new challenges. Drugs in the workplace. We need to address and solve the drug problem. Workers who enter the workforce with a drug problem are not fulfilling their key responsibilities to their employer when they have this problem.

Workers need more flexibility. Different family styles, two parents working, they need more flexibility to be able to support their children at home.

What does that mean? That is something we are going to have to debate and work through. Every place that I have gone to has had a low unemployment rate. They take a look at our

Federal programs and they say, have you got training programs for this and for that, training programs for this group? It is not what we need. We need the opportunity at a local level to address the workers' skill issue, that for those communities that have low unemployment the issue of training workers is very different.

When we have got 4 percent unemployment, the type of work, the type of skills and the type of effort we need to bring to those 4 percent in the workforce may be very different than if we are in an area that has 8 or 10 percent unemployment, may be very different in an area where we just had a major manufacturer leave and we are trying to retrain the workers that were in this business and attract new businesses.

It is a very complex economy that we work in, and we need to design flexibility within our programs so that the leaders at the local level can identify the problems and the opportunities that they have, and we have to recognize that they are best able to identify what they need to do about that.

Again, we have seen wonderful examples. Sometimes they say we are not maximizing what we can do because we have got so many rules and regulations coming from Washington.

A lot of talk about alternative work styles. What I am talking about here is we have got full-time permanent employees, we have got part-time permanent employees, we have got temporary workers, we have got contract employees, we have got leased employees. There are all kinds of different work arrangements. Should Federal labor law reward one or recognize one as being better than others?

Some of the highest paid workers in the high-tech industry love being contract employees or love being independent contractors. They love being independent workers who maybe work from their home and go and work for certain companies on a specific project for a specific period of time and then move on to another challenge or do that as perhaps they are developing a business. Is that better or worse than being a full-time permanent employee? Current labor law would lead us to believe that one is better than another. I am not sure that is the right case.

We need to recognize that people want different work styles because the type of jobs and the type of family structure and the type of challenges that they want and what is important to them may be very different than what they were in 1938 or 1948.

We met with a group of individuals who have disabilities. We have a decreasing rate of population growth. We should do everything we can to enable those people to be fully employed as well. Whether we have high growth rates or whether we have low growth rates, they deserve an opportunity to contribute in our society.

Then why is it that current Medicare and Medicaid assistance provides disincentives for these people to go to work?

One person mentioned that he has the opportunity to do this, to take a \$30,000 a year job. If he takes the job, he will lose \$29,000 a year attending care assistance.

Maybe there is a better way to do that, a compromise that says, we really want you in the workforce. You want to contribute. We know that this is not a good trade-off for you. As a matter of fact, this trade-off does not work for you, that if you go out and take a job and earn \$30,000, the first \$29,000 goes to replace what otherwise you would have got from Medicare or Medicaid. How do we fix that? How do we solve that?

It is the best solution for this individual. I think we can reach a compromise that would save taxpayers money.

Why are some of these things happening? It comes back to technology. Technology is opening up a whole new world for individuals with disabilities to contribute. We need to recognize that, and we need to modify American labor law to take that into account.

Finally, we cannot go around America and talk to workers and business without hearing about bureaucracy, red tape, and the Federal Government wasting money. Too often, these companies are burdened with costs placed on them by the Federal Government that add no value.

We have got to recognize that there are American workers and American businesses that are trying to be globally competitive, who each day are going out there; and they are pinching pennies; and they are finding pennies; and they are saving nickels; and they are glad they do it. And when they do it, that money either goes to the employee or it goes back in investment or it goes to a shareholder or goes in lower prices. But that is a positive thing to do when we find waste.

What we are saying with the American working project is saying to the American worker and to American business, help us find that waste in government regulations. How can you save pennies and nickels in Federal rules and regulations that add costs to your business but do not add any value? What would you like to do in your business but cannot because Federal labor laws are in the way?

We need help to identify what works and what is wasted. We need help in identifying where we need to go and how we are going to get there, and we need help from the American worker. We need help because we are developing an agenda for you that will help you be successful, will help you be competitive and will enable you to be the most productive worker on the planet.

When we combine high productivity with high skills and a favorable economic climate, those high-paying jobs will be in America. That is where we want them to be. That is where we need them to be. And, by partnering together, that is where we will be.

My colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is not here. I was going to yield the last 10 or 15 minutes of this special order to him.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the Minority Leader.

(Mr. OWENS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I also would like to compliment the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. HOEKSTRA), who spoke before me, a fellow member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. I found his presentation fascinating.

I would certainly like to be a part of discussion on the items that he outlined there and hope that the committee itself officially can take up some of that discussion also. We will all benefit greatly from the kind of macrovision that he brings. And I salute the gentleman.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OWENS. I yield to the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. HOEKSTRA. I would very much look forward to working with my colleague. I realize that it is a complex issue, and I really think that where we are beginning with a macropicture really allows us to go through a learning process in very much a bipartisan way. So thank you very much, and I look forward to working with you.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I salute the gentleman; and I congratulate him on his vision. I hope he understands also that a part of what he is talking about cannot be separated from education, what happens in our schools. He did mention the kind of training the workers will have to have, and that is what I want to talk about again tonight.

Education for the next 3 or 4 months is certainly on my agenda; and I hope to put it on the agenda of most of my colleagues, especially those who are on the Committee on Education and the Workforce. I hope that all the Members of Congress will not let the present discussion that has been launched by the President in his State of the Union address, a list of items that he gave there related to education, I hope that that wonderful list will not get lost. I hope that we will not have a fragmentation of the discussions about education to the point where we have all these tiny, separate discussions going on and there is no focus, no unity and no sense of priorities.

I want to hold on to a sense of priorities within that education list that the President offered. Some things are

more important than others. One thing is key to everything else. Unless we understand that, I think we are going to lose out in our efforts to improve the schools, those schools that need improvement; and the great majority of American schools do need improvement, some more than others.

In the inner city communities, like the ones in my district and in many other big cities, inner city schools are on the verge of collapse. They have lost their education mission already. There is a ceremony going on where the kids come to school. But, for a number of reasons, education of the kind needed to prepare youngsters for the complex society that we live in is not taking place.

So I really want to focus finally on that. I think that some of the other things I have to say are very much related; but, most of all, I want to keep the drumbeat going for the improvement of education. It must be kept on center stage.

There is a dangerous education emergency in the inner city communities of America where most African-American students attend school, and I want to send that message to my constituents and to other representatives of African-American districts and to the people who live in these districts. We have an emergency which is far greater than anything else that exists in American education.

Other schools are in trouble. There is a need for improvement everywhere. Rural schools and schools where poor children attend are probably in similar difficulties to the schools of the inner city where most African-Americans attend school. But all schools can stand some improvement.

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The emergency must be recognized, however, in the African American community, with leaders of the African American community. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, everybody in a position which has any influence must be made to understand that our schools are falling behind at a more rapid rate every day.

The indicator of the African American education emergency, which has the highest visibility and the most obvious exposure of neglect, is the dangerous and counterproductive condition of school buildings.

I focused on construction, education and infrastructure, because that is most visible. If we cannot deal with that which is most visible and most obvious, then I have no hope that we are going to deal with the more complex in a meaningful and productive way.

There are a lot of people who want to micro-manage the schools and have an answer for every problem that exists in the schools. Most of the people who have all the answers never took a single course in education at any college anywhere or never read a book on education, but every adult in America has ideas on how to improve education.

But it is important that all of us, leaders and laymen, experts in education, et cetera, admit that there is something obvious that has to be corrected before we go forward on any other level. We cannot improve our schools with respect to the ratio of teachers to pupils in the early grades. That is one of the items on President Clinton's list, and I welcome that item, and we all should. It just makes a whole lot of sense. It is supported by a whole lot of research.

It is not the solution to the problem. Automatically children do not learn by being placed in a situation where there are fewer children with one teacher, but it does improve things a great deal.

However, you cannot have a better ratio of students to pupils unless you have more classrooms. You have got to construct more classrooms. You cannot have a situation where the teacher with the lower ratio of pupils to teacher can do anything, if the classroom that she has to teach in is unsafe, if it is poorly lighted. It is counterproductive with respect to education, and you are going to have no result from the initiative to produce more teachers and smaller classes.

There are many other problems which result in a denial of the opportunity to learn to inner-city, rural and poor children all over America. There are other problems, other than construction, other than the physical infrastructure problem. But the physical condition of the schoolhouse itself tells the story of inadequacy with a loud and clear example.

We do not have to go into abstract reasoning. We do not have to go into syllogisms, deductive or any other kind of reasoning. We do not have to use boolean algebra. It is quite obvious when a school is 100 years old; it is quite obvious when a boiler in a school has a coal burning boiler and it is 70 years old. It is quite obvious there is a problem. It is quite obvious if you have coal burning furnaces in schools, you are contributing to a pollution problem that you are teaching children every day in the classroom should be eliminated. Some things are obvious, and, because they are obvious, it is a good place to start.

So I want to start to continue the drum beat today on this theme. But before I do that, I want to talk about two other items that still relate back to the central theme of we have an educational emergency, and the place to begin to deal with that emergency is to deal with school construction and improvement of the infrastructure, to be real about it, to follow through on the President's proposal that we have \$5 billion for 5 years, which is totally inadequate, but it is a beginning, to use his initiative; to call upon the President to use the bully pulpit of the White House; to call upon the governors and the mayors in cities and states where they have a surplus now, a budget surplus, to let them take the initiative at the local and state level